

9. Housing and specific client groups

9.1 Children and young people

Children and young people are one of the seven priorities within our Corporate Strategy¹. We want to continue to work with young people and children recognising that they are a minority in East Devon. We wish to inspire young people to achieve their best and to tackle issues which concern them.

Every Child Matters (ECM)² is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being.

Through ECM agencies such as education, health and police are obliged to work together to improve outcomes for children. There is an emphasis on early intervention and prevention work. One of the challenges is that while some children are more vulnerable than others all children need to be considered. The Devon Children's Trust Partnership has drawn up the **Devon Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011**³ which sets out nine cross cutting projects which all partners will work to support.

The needs of children may in part be due to their housing. The Children's Trust Housing Group is focusing on homelessness prevention. The key objectives are:

- prevention of homelessness through improved advice and information
- mediation
- joint working protocols
- increasing the amount of move on accommodation particularly for young couples and young parents
- delivery of affordable housing
- signposting to other support agencies.

They are looking at good practice to:

- develop floating support and supported accommodation projects
- develop joint funding of projects
- provide supported lodgings and youth housing advisors
- identify the links between transport and employment prospects.

Measures of success will be:

- the number of young people approaching as homeless
- the number of move on accommodation units available
- the number of children and young people accepted as vulnerable
- reductions in evictions from supported accommodation
- outcomes – improving the chances for young people to get on.

These priorities have been highlighted within our Homelessness Strategy⁴.

¹ East Devon Corporate Strategy December 2007 – www.eastdevon.gov.uk

² www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

³ www.devon.gov.uk/cypplan2008.pdf

⁴ www.eastdevon.gov.uk/google/housing_policies_and_strategies

The Housing and Social Inclusion Services has appointed a **Community Development Worker** to work specifically with young people to give a voice to the large minority of council house residents who are not yet adult. This will enable us to stimulate inter-generational work, tackle aspects of perceived fear and antisocial behaviour which relate to young people and allow advocacy for the needs of some of the most vulnerable young people.

In August 2006 we organised the BIASed (BMX In-Line and Skate) event in Seaton, as we had recognised that young people in and around Seaton lacked any major fun activity during the summer holidays. The event attracted around 400 competitors, friends and family and was a great success. We also used the day to find out what young people thought about living in East Devon.

During 2007/08 we organised a series of **'Play Days'** across the district, providing free holiday activities for children in various locations. We will be running similar activities in 2008/09.

During 2008/09 we will look at producing a Young Person's Housing Strategy for East Devon, with assistance from The Children's Trust Housing Steering Group, and investigate the possibility of setting up a young person's housing forum to oversee its delivery.

9.2 Older and Disabled People who are not council tenants

As well as the community alarm service, we assist elderly and disabled people (who are not council tenants) to stay in their own homes by undertaking improvements and adaptations using the Disabled Facilities Grant programme (see Section 7.11).

The recent Private Sector Stock Condition Survey⁵ highlighted the need and continuing high demand for adaptations and accessible homes for people with physical disabilities (there are approximately 8740 households in East Devon with one or more residents with a disability, representing 16.8% of the total housing stock). In an effort to meet these requirements we are working with Devon County Council Occupational Therapists to ensure that all residents are treated equitably and can access the Disabled Facilities Grant programme and other forms of financial assistance, to ensure that their needs and those of their carers are met.

Housing partners also help other people to continue to live independently in various other ways, including the provision of additional housing designed for this purpose. Accommodation for older people is in plentiful supply, with over 2000 council and housing association homes. Some of the schemes have proved not to be popular and work is being undertaken to ensure that this type of accommodation is gradually replaced with modern self-contained sheltered accommodation or alternative general needs housing provision. We are committed to working with our RSL partners to make best use of their stock, redeveloping schemes, where appropriate.

During 2008/09 we are undertaking a feasibility study to look at extending our mobile support services to residents in the private sector (see Section 7.6).

9.3 Victims of domestic violence

There has been a significant improvement in working relations between agencies working with victims of domestic violence over the last few years. East Devon Domestic Violence Forum meets regularly and we liaise closely with Woman's Aid, Against Domestic Violence and Abuse, the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit and Police, who together provide accommodation, advice and support to survivors of domestic violence.

⁵ Private Sector House Condition Survey 2006, June 2007, Professional Partnership Services Group

There is a Devon wide Code of Good Practice that all local authorities in the county have implemented. This ensures that a similar level of service provision is accessible to all service users across the county.

We have trained and dedicated housing officers who deal with homeless presentations and applications from survivors of domestic violence. A **'sanctuary' scheme** in East Devon has been operating for a year. This enables victims to remain in their home with additional security measures and support where this is appropriate. Recently a Devon wide Sanctuary Scheme has been developed to ensure consistency of approach. Many people, although they are under the threat of violence, do not wish to move home as they may live near to friends, family, schools and other support networks. The sanctuary scheme aims to help victims of domestic violence and abuse feel safe and secure when they choose to remain in their own homes. The scheme provides an immediate response and is tailored to meet the needs of individuals. Security measures include a simple lock change to the creation of a safe room in the home where the victim can stay until police arrive.

The scheme is available free of charge to council, RSL and private tenants, and owner occupiers. All victims of domestic abuse, hate crime, racial harassment or other violence, living in the district, will be considered for the scheme.

Devon and Cornwall Housing Association provide a safe house in the district, with partners providing seven bed places. We also work in partnership with Exeter City Council to provide a women's refuge, for women who suffer from domestic violence. In 2007/08 we referred six cases of domestic violence to the refuge.

9.4 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households

The proportion of BME groups in the East Devon population is low (0.7%). The 2001 Census figures revealed that a total of just under 880 people described their ethnic group as non-white. The highest proportion was Chinese (total 169).

We aim to ensure that there are equal opportunities in the access to council housing, private rented housing, housing associations and housing services for BME residents. A partnership of housing providers will ensure that ethnic minorities have an equitable choice in securing housing.

We have adopted a Racial Equality Policy for rented housing to demonstrate a commitment to preventing and eliminating racial discrimination. In 2008 the Tenant and Leaseholder Customer Panel will be drawing up a Race Equality Statement specifically for tenants and leaseholders.

We will shortly be carrying out a full tenant profiling exercise of all council tenants and will use this to ensure that all sections of the population are adequately represented and have opportunities for involvement.

9.5 Gypsies, travellers, and residential mobile homes

A Devon wide Gypsy and Traveller housing need assessment was conducted in November 2006⁶ with the overarching aim of assessing the housing and accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers within the Devon wide area. Subsequently an options report for East Devon was published in April 2008⁷. This makes 14 recommendations covering pitch provision, service provision and better communication and information sharing. There is a need for a further nine pitches by 2011 and 21 by 2026. We will work with the Planning Service towards meeting this need.

⁶ Devon-wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment, November 2006, Social Research and Regeneration Unit, University of Plymouth

⁷ East Devon LDF Gypsy and Traveller Issues and Options Report April 2008

East Devon's Local Plan (1995-2011)⁸ states that there has, in recent years, been little pressure to establish new sites for residential mobile homes, although some existing sites have been upgraded or extended. Proposals for residential mobile homes will be subject to the same policies as other housing proposals.

9.6 Overseas workers

In East Devon in 2006/07 overseas workers registered in the district made up 8% of the working population. Workers from Poland formed the largest proportion of these.

The fact that migrant workers made up a significant proportion of the East Devon population was recognised by the Devon Strategic Partnership – Equality Strategy and Scrutiny Group, who identified the need to heighten the profile of this group.

Workers from Eastern Europe have restricted entry and the main effect of this is the restriction on claiming benefits in the first year in the UK. Migrants are often obliged to live in the private rented sector or move into temporary accommodation. Accommodation linked to their employment is often found to be rife with problems, including exploitation, poor living conditions, overcrowding, insecurity and lack of privacy.

A study by the Anglo Polish Organisation of Tiverton⁹ asked a series of questions to Polish people living in Devon, which provides an indication of migrant housing in the region. This showed that:

- 53% of Polish migrants were single
- only 7.6% lived alone
- most migrant workers live in an HMO
- nearly 42% did not know where to go for housing advice
- less than 4% live in housing association or council housing properties.

It is clear that the housing needs of migrant workers in Devon are linked to many other issues such as employment, language barriers, and access to information and benefits.

The Devon Strategic Partnership has recently produced a welcome pack for Polish migrant workers¹⁰.

9.7 People with learning disabilities

The Learning Disability Health and Social Care Partnership provides services across East Devon. The partnership is led by Devon Social Services and also involves the Devon Partnership Trust and the Primary Care Trust in Devon. The partnership aims to provide people with a learning disability, and their carers, a "joined up" service with a single point of access.

For many people with disabilities, schemes have been developed offering a range of support and accommodation. This can include group housing or paid carers either living in the property or calling to offer practical help relating to, for example, cleaning or finances. Practical help with remaining in their own home can be provided by Social Services or through Supporting People. A support worker with the Learning Disability team covers East Devon.

Throughout East Devon there are about 320 individuals with learning disabilities (people with a recognised IQ of below 70). Some of the individuals will never be able to live in

⁸ East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011 Adopted July 2006 www.eastdevon.gov.uk

⁹ The Housing Needs of Migrant Workers in Devon, April 2008, The Anglo-Polish Organisation of Tiverton, published by Involve

¹⁰ www.devonsp.org.uk/migrantworkers

mainstream housing as they will always require high level supported housing. Others will require support in their existing home and some may require housing either to meet their specific needs or because they need to live independently.

An exercise mapping information about the 14+ age group in East Devon showed that potentially 29 people below the age of 18 years with learning disabilities may require social rented or other accommodation. A further 49 people are looking for suitable supported living placements or move on accommodation of some kind. We will work with the learning disability team to ensure the provision of timely and suitable accommodation when required.

9.8 Equality Statement

We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities in all of our activities and we value diversity. Every effort will be made to ensure that staff and members of the public are treated equitably and fairly, regardless of race, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, colour, region, disability or age. We have recently adopted a corporate Equality and Diversity Policy and this strategy will work to the principles contained in the corporate document. During 2008/09 all housing staff will undertake further training on equality and diversity.

In addition, we are carrying out **Equality Impact Assessments** on all strategies, policies and processes to determine their potential or actual impact, to ensure they do not have an adverse impact on a particular group due to their gender, age, race, religion, sexuality, disability or social class. The assessments will also provide the opportunity to promote equality and diversity, as well as good community relations, and help identify positive impacts we may wish to develop further.